

for he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
Roial he was, he was namore aferd;
He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as ofte, er that it was pryde.
He looketh as it were a grym leoun;
And on his toos he rometh up and down,
Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chuketh, when he hath a corn yfounde,
And to hym rennen thanne his wyves alle.
Thus roial, as a prince is in an halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleere in his pasture;
And after wol I telle his aventure.

CHAN that the monthe in which the world
began,
That highte March, when God first
maked man,

Was compleet, and ypassed were also,
Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer, in al his pryde,
His seven wyves walkyng by his syde,
Caste up his eyen to the bryghte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somwhat moore;
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryde, and crew with blisful stevene.

The sonne, he seyde, is clomben up on hevne
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore, ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkeneth this blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge;
ful is myn herte of revel and solas.

But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas;
For evere the latter ende of joy is wo.
God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;
And if a rethor koude faire endite,
He in a cronicle saufully myghte it write,
His for a sovereyn notabilitee.

Now every wys man, lat him herken me;
This storie is al so trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
Now wol I come agayn to my sentence.

COLFOX, ful of sty iniquitee,
That in the grove hadde woned yeres
three,

By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,
The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast
Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passed undren of the day,
Waityng his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle;
As gladly doon this homycides alle,
That in await ligen to mordre men.

O false mordreour, lurkyng in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genyloun!
false dissimylour, O Greek Synoun,
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecleer, cursed be that morwe,
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes,
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,

After the opinioun of certein clerkis,
Witnessse on hym, that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun,
In this mateere, and greet disputacioun,
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne kan nat bulle it to the bren,
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece, or the bisshope Bradwardyn,
Whether that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedefully to doon a thyng,
Nedely clepe I symple necessitee,
Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot it, er that it was wroght;
Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
But by necessitee condicionel.

I wil nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
That took his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met that drem that I of tolde.

COMMENNES conseil been ful of trecolde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to go,
And made Adam fro Paradyse to go,
Theras he was ful myrie and wel at ese;
But, for I noot to whom it myght displese
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.

Rede auctours where they tete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may here.
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
I kan noon harm of no womman divyne.

HIRE in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
for Phisicologus seith sikerly,
How that they synge wel and myrily.

And so bifel that, as he cast his eye,
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, Cok, cok! and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte;
for naturelly a beest desireth flee
fro his contrarie, if he may it see,

Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his eye.
This Chauntecleer, when he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye.
I am nat come your conseil for respye;
But trewely, the cause of my comyng
Was oonly for to herken how that ye synge;
for trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
As any aungel hath that is in hevne.
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelyng
Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.
My lord youre fader, God his soule blesse!
And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse,
Han in myn hous ybeen to my greet ese,

And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plesse.
But for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye,
So moote I brouthe wel myne eyen tweye,
Save yow, I herde nevere man yet synge
As dide youre fader in the morwenyng.
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song;
And for to make his voys the moore strong,
He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his eyen
He mooste wyne, so loude he wolde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And strecche forth his nekke, long and smal.
And eek he was of swich discrecioun,
That ther nas no man in no regioun
That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe.
I have wel rad in Daun Burnel the Asse,
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok
for that a preestes sone yaf hym a knok
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,
He made hym for to lese his benefice;
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun
Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun
Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.

Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee;
Lat se, howe ye youre fader countrefete.

THIS Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete,
As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,
So was he ravysched with his flaterie.

Alas, ye lordes, many a fals flatour
Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,
That plesen yow yet more, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterie;
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.

DESTINEE, that mayst nat been
eschewed!
Alas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro
the bemes!
Alas, his wyf ne roghte nat of
dremes!

And on a friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddess of plesaunce,
Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his power,
Moore for delit, than world to multiplie,
Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
That, when thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore!
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence, and thy loore,
The friday for to chide, as diden ye?
for on a friday, soothly, slayn was he.
Thanne wolde I shewe yow how that I koude
pleyne
for Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.
Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
Was nevere of ladyes maad, when Ylioun

Was wonne, and Pirrus, with his streite sward,
When he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,
And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,
As maden alle the hennas in the clos,
When they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe,
ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
When that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romainys hadde brend Cartage;
She was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
And brende hirselves with a stedfast herte.

OF AL hennas, right so criden ye,
As, when that Nero brende the citee
Of Rome, cryden the senatours wyves,
for that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves;
Withouthen gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wol I turne to my tale agayn:

THIS sely wydw, and eek hir doghtres two,
Herden thise hennas crie and maken wo,
And out at dores stirten they anon,
And syen the fox toward the grove gon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away,
And cryden, Out! harrow! and weylaway!
Ha! ha! the fox! and after hym they ran,
And eek with staves many another man;
Ran Colle, our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
forfered for the berkyng of the dogges,
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek;
They ronned so, hem thoughte hir herte brek.
They yelleden, as feendes doon in helle;
The dokes cryden, as men wolde hem quelle;
The gees, for feere, flownen over the trees;
Out of the hye cam the swarm of bees;
So hydous was the noyse, al benedicitee!
Certes, he Jakke Straw, and his meynee,
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille,
When that they wolden any flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe & powped,
And therwithal they shrieked and they howped;
It semed as that hevne sholde falle.

OW, goode men, I pray yow herkneth
alle;
Lo, how fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope & pryde eek of hir enemy!
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
In al his drede unto the fox he spak,

And seyde, Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
A verray pestilence upon yow falle;
Now am I come unto the wodes syde,
Maugree youre heed, the cok shal here abyde;
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon!
The fox answerde, In feith, it shal be don.
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly
This cok brak from his mouth delyverly
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.
And when the fox saugh that he was ygon,